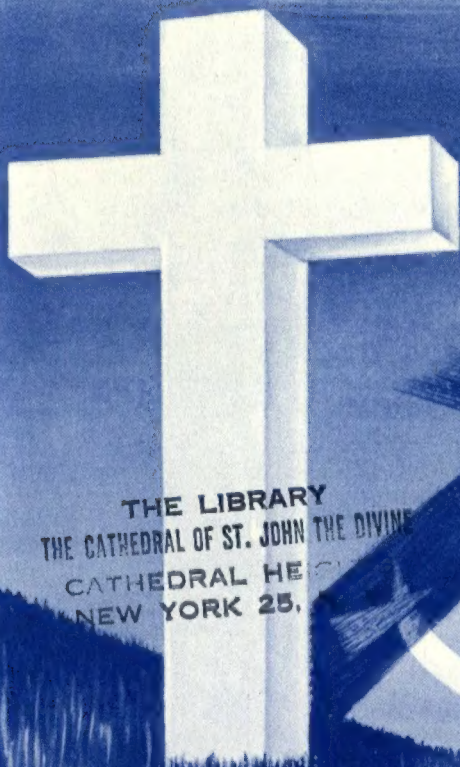


# The Church: Bulwark against Communism



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THE Church is your bulwark against communism. This is so because the Church preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whenever the Holy Communion is celebrated or Morning Prayer read in the eight thousand Episcopal parishes and missions in this country and overseas, we reaffirm our faith in God. We, thereby, reject the atheism and materialism which are at the heart of communism.

The Church teaches that our duty to God carries with it a duty to our fellow men; we cannot truly love God if we hate people whom He made.

The Church officially has declared that communism is an enemy of Christianity, both because of its philosophy of materialism and because of its utter disregard of the dignity of human beings. Communism is also the enemy of freedom, both spiritual and political. The Church teaches the necessity of freedom for the individual and for itself.

The position of the Church was reaffirmed by three hundred bishops of the Episcopal Church and other branches of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference of 1948; by the Presiding Bishop in his address to the House of Bishops in 1953; and in the 1953 Pastoral Letter issued at Williamsburg.

The National Council has brought missionaries from overseas for an intensive seminar on the dangers of communism and the best methods of meeting it on the mission field. It has published study material, to help Churchmen understand the menace of communism.

The Church is concerned about the people of the nation and of the world; their needs,

aspirations, problems. In its name, many welfare programs are conducted, such as schools, hospitals, homes for children and older persons, settlement houses, clinics. It proclaims the necessity of justice for ethnic, racial, and underprivileged persons and groups. It works for justice, for freedom, and for world peace. It gives assistance overseas to war refugees, to persons who escape persecution behind the Iron Curtain, and it sponsors the resettlement of eligible refugees in the United States.

The Church teaches the responsibility of Christian citizenship; that its members should work for the right kind of community, nation, and world. From time to time, the Church and its leaders urge private citizens and government officials to consider measures designed to promote the welfare of all along Christian lines.

### The Real Front Line

Most important of all, perhaps, the Church teaches its people, young and old, what it means to live as Christians. This is the real front line of action to overcome the threat of communism. This education in Christian living goes on not only in the United States, but in many other countries; it goes on in thousands of church schools, where hundreds of thousands of children gather; it goes on in the Church's day-by-day work in farm areas, in small towns, and in the great urban centers.

The Church is prophet as well as pastor to her people. If communists pretend to be interested in these same needs and problems of people, the Church does not give up her concern but should

strive so well in her good works that false claims would stand exposed.

The active role of the Church in the lives of its people, and in the world, is the bulwark against communism. These things for which the Church stands and which it practices, are clear and plain to all who care to know and accept the hard facts. But some people claim not to know or deliberately suggest that the record is not what it actually is.

It may help church people stand for the truth, to combat error and falsehood, and more effectively to follow the teachings of the Church, to have these truths set forth again in a form so plain, so simple and so direct that all may see the truth who care for the truth.

To make clear the active role of the Church against communism, the Bishops of the Episcopal Church have pointed out:

"The greatest avowed enemy of Christianity is communism with its basic philosophy of materialism. Closely allied to this foe of Christianity is another form of totalitarianism which deifies the State, expressing itself in various forms of National State Socialism. These two aspects of the modern situation have been brought before us here by our Presiding Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Henry Knox Sherrill, in these words:

*"The meeting\* here is symbolic not only of the historic past, but it has deep significance for the problems of our day. It should hardly be necessary to state that the Christian Church is opposed to communism as a threat not only to individual freedom but indeed to everything for*

\*House of Bishops, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1953.



*which the Christian religion stands. But it is necessary to make this statement, for there have been broad generalizations and accusations, particularly against those Churches which have a democratic tradition. The fact is that the Christian Churches are the greatest bulwark against atheism and the wide philosophy and practice of communism. It is not simply a matter of pronouncements but of all that happens on the parish level: the training of children, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, the worship of Almighty God. The Church is equally opposed to what may be described as creeping fascism. We know from our brethren of the Churches abroad that often fascism has come upon them unawares. We are against trial by uninformed public opinion, against accusations by hearsay. . . . We are for fairness, and justice, as a part both of Christianity and of our democratic way of life."*

### **A Special Duty of the Church**

EARLIER, back in 1948, the Lambeth Conference, a meeting of bishops from all the Churches (including the Episcopal Church in the United States) of the Anglican Communion, emphasized the "special duty of the Church to oppose the challenge of the Marxian theory of communism." They declared to Christians everywhere:

" . . . that Marxian communism is contrary to Christian faith and practice, for it denies the existence of God, Revelation, and a future life; it treats the individual man as a means and not an end; it encourages class warfare; it regards the moral law not as absolute but as relative to

the needs of the State. The Conference holds that while a State must take the precaution it regards as necessary to protect good order and peace from all subversive movements, it is the special duty of the Church to oppose the challenge of the Marxian theory of communism by sound teaching and the example of a better way, and that the Church, at all times and in all places should be a fearless witness against political and economic injustice.

"The Conference believes that communism is presenting a challenge to Christian people to study and understand its theory and practice, so that they may be well instructed as to which elements in it are in conflict with the Christian view of man and must therefore be resisted, and which elements are a true judgment on the existing social and economic order."

#### **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

For further study of how the Christian meets and overcomes communism, read these materials published by the Episcopal Church:

*The Christian Faces Communism* by Gilbert H. and Martha Sherman Baker (New York, Woman's Auxiliary to the National Council). A program on Communism and Christianity for study groups presented in the form of a dialogue.

*Communism and Christianity* (Greenwich, Seabury Press), a leader's guide, selected readings, and recommended reading list by Theodore M. Switz, a family study plan course.



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